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Life

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LIFELINE

A QUICK READ ON WHAT PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY: James Earl Ray's getaway car will be auctioned Nov. 12 in Memphis. Ray, serving 99 years for killing Martin Luther King Jr., sold his 60 percent share in the 1966 Ford Mustang to an unidentified buyer; private investigator Renfro Hays gets the other 40 percent. The car was impounded April 11, 1968.

Compiled by Tracey Wong Briggs

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

MEMPHIS, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1987

King killer working in laundry

B5

NASHVILLE (AP) — James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has been transferred to a different prison and given a new security status that allows him to work, officials say.

State Correction Commissioner Steve Norris said Friday that Ray was transferred last week from the Southeastern Tennessee Regional Correctional Facility in Bledsoe County to Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary in Petros.

His status has been changed from maximum security to close security and he is being allowed to work in the prison laundry, Norris said.

Close security is a designation that falls between minimum and maximum security.

"The move is a result of an improvement in his behavior," Norris said.

Ray is serving 99 years for the 1968 slaying of Dr. King in Memphis. He has tried to escape several times and got outside the walls of Brushy Mountain for two days in 1977 before being recaptured in the rugged terrain nearby.

He was transferred from Brushy to the Tennessee State Prison in Nashville in 1981 after being stabbed by a group of inmates.

He was moved earlier this year from the Tennessee State Prison to the Southeastern Tennessee Regional Correctional Facility.

2A • TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 1986 • USA TODAY

King killer wants off death row

James Earl Ray says life on death row is bad for his health — and he wants out.

"My blood pressure has gone up 35 points since they've had me here," said Ray, serving a 99 years for killing the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., on April 4, 1968.

"I don't think they'll keep me segregated all my life. This is unhealthy," Ray told the *Nashville Tennessean*.

Ray was moved into solitary at Nashville State Penitentiary, where Death Row inmates are housed, in June 1981 when he was transferred from Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary after inmates stabbed him.

Two days after pleading guilty, Ray, 57, said he was not guilty, maintained he never had anything to do with King's murder and asked for a jury trial.

After almost 18 years, he's still trying to prove his innocence — but without luck.

"I doubt they would give me a trial if Jesus Christ asked them," he said recently. "I don't really have much hope. I file and say whatever I think.

"Lawyers say, 'Let's don't get the judge mad,' but I bring it all out. I won't get out sitting here filing writs; judges will have to decide I need a trial."

Ray says he knows little about the slain civil rights leader, and he is ambivalent about the Jan. 20 holiday celebrating King's birth.

"I don't think there's another black holiday. The government passed a law making the holiday; it's a political thing," he said. "It don't make any difference to me."

Ray's wife, Anna Sandu Ray, a former Knoxville artist, now lives near Nashville. They were married in 1978 while Ray was in Brushy Mountain.